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THE ISLAND AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD

IT IS THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, AND THE ARCTIC IS STILL A GREAT UNKNOWN. ONLY THE MOST INTREPID CHALLENGE ITS ICY BARRIERS! NO WONDER THEN THAT THE SIGHT OF A STRANGE CRAFT IN THE AIR ABOVE ELLESMERE ISLAND CAUSES PANIC AMONG THE ESKIMOS THERE!



IN THE GONDOLA OF THE AIRSHIP "HYPERION" ARE CAPTAIN BRIEUX, COMMANDER OF THE CRAFT, AND BRITISH INDUSTRIALIST SIR ANTHONY ROSS...

ALSO ABOARD ARE JOHN IVARSSON, AN ARCHAEOLOGIST AND AN AUTHORITY ON NORSE CULTURE, AND AN ESKIMO NAMED OOMIAK!



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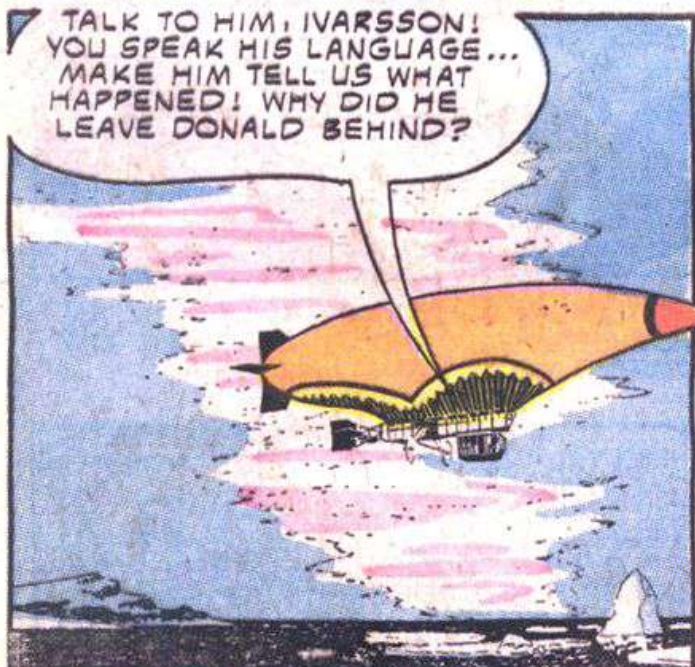
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IT **DOES** EXIST! IT **MUST** EXIST! MY SON WENT THERE...WENT LOOKING FOR THE GRAVEYARD OF THE WHALES! AND THAT... THAT ESKIMO WENT WITH HIM!

I'M SURE THAT'S A THING THAT OOMIAK GREATLY REGRETS!



TALK TO HIM, IVARSSON! YOU SPEAK HIS LANGUAGE... MAKE HIM TELL US WHAT HAPPENED! WHY DID HE LEAVE DONALD BEHIND?

WHEN HE HEARS THESE WORDS, THE ESKIMO STRAIGHTENS AND...



I NOT LEAVE DONALD! WE...WE FIND ISLAND, BUT SPIRITS MAKE BIG STORM! WE ARE BLIND IN BIG STORM!



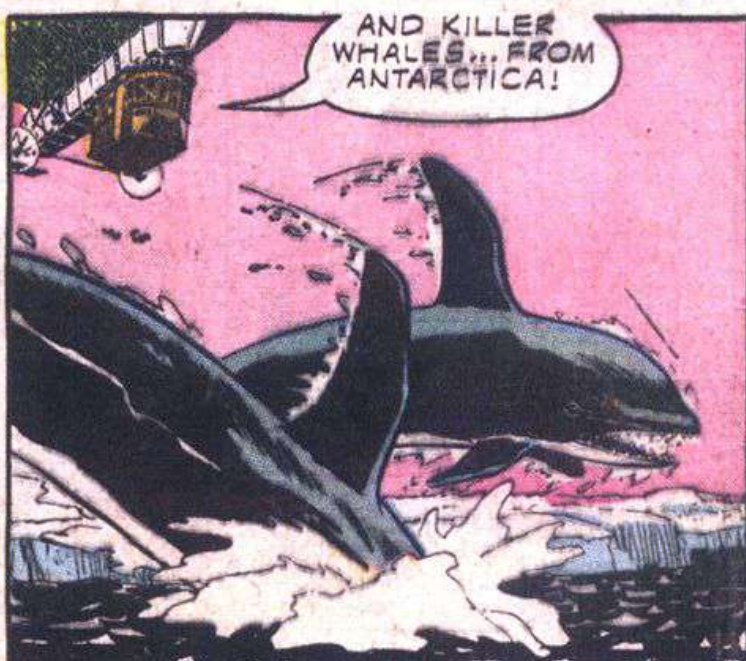
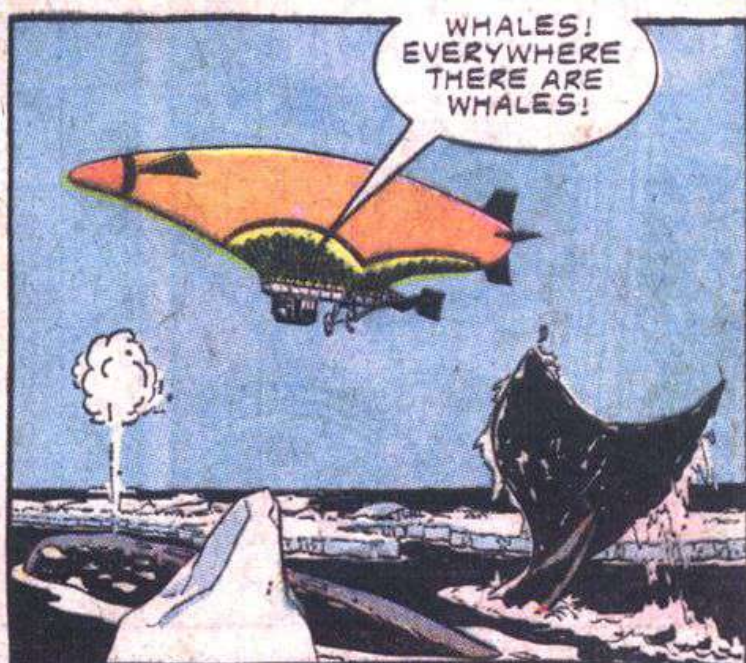
WHEN STORM OVER, I SEARCH MANY HOURS! NO DONALD! I TELL TRUTH!



YOU DONALD'S FATHER! I DONALD'S FRIEND!

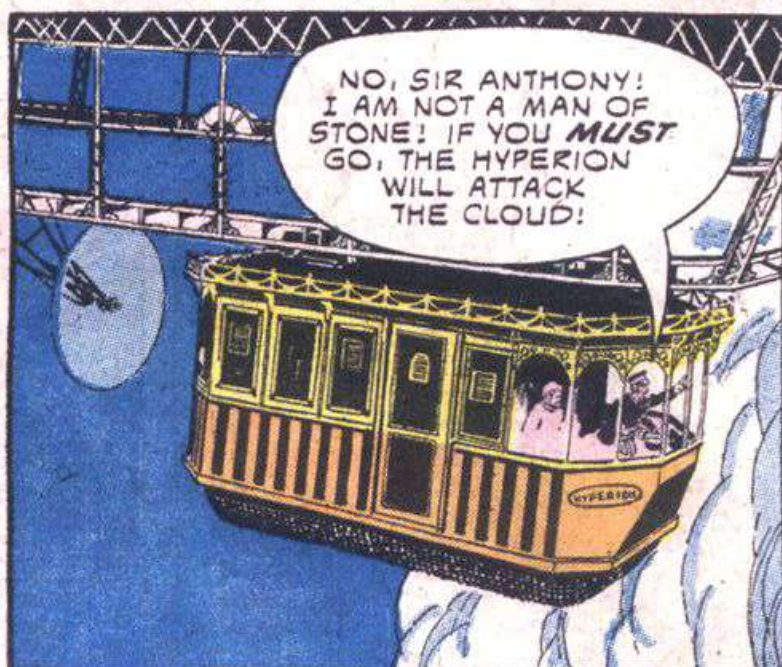
I... I AM SORRY, OOMIAK, BUT... BUT NOW YOU MUST HELP US SEARCH... AGAIN!

SO THE HYPERION, CARRYING THE RESEARCHERS AND THE FRIGHTENED ESKIMO, FLIES NORTH UNTIL...





AS THE HYPERION NEARS THE CLOUD,
HOWEVER...





BUT WHEN IVARSSON OPENS THE DOOR OF THE GONDOLA TO PUSH OUT A CRATE...



THE DESPERATE CAPTAIN WATCHES HELPLESSLY FROM THE GONDOLA AS HIS SHIP IS SWEEPED UP RAPIDLY, AWAY FROM HIS COMRADES...



...AND IT DISAPPEARS IN THE MISTY CLOUDS, LEAVING THREE CASTAWAYS ALONE IN THE ICY WILDERNESS!



THE THREE MEN CLIMB THROUGH THE MISTS TO THE TOP OF A RING OF CLIFFS, AND...

SIR ANTHONY!
LOOK!

INCREDIBLE! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! ALL THIS ICE AND SNOW... AND THEN A GREEN, FERTILE VALLEY!

AND A TOWN!

THIS ISLAND IS VOLCANIC! THE HEAT MUST COME UP THROUGH FISSURES IN THE GROUND!

WHAT...?

AIEEE! THE SPIRITS!

THWACK!

OUT OF THE MISTS AND THE GLOOM, THE "SPIRITS" WHOM OOMIAK DREAMS DO APPEAR!

THE SPIRITS!
THE SPIRITS WHO MAKE THE STORM!

WHY... WHY THEY LOOK LIKE THE ANCIENT VIKINGS!

GOOD HEAVENS!

IF THEY ARE SPIRITS, THEY ARE NOT FRIENDLY SPIRITS. IVARSSON, ROSS AND OOMJAK ARE FORCED TO MARCH DOWN A ROUGH TRAIL TOWARD THE VALLEY...

THEY SPEAK NORSE — THE OLD NORSE OF THE SAGAS! IT'S A LOT LIKE MODERN ICELANDIC! I BELIEVE THEY THINK WE'RE INVADERS, COME TO TAKE THEIR LAND!

WHO CARES WHAT THEY THINK! THERE ARE PEOPLE HERE, AND THAT MEANS **DONALD** COULD BE HERE — ALIVE!

WHEN THEY HAVE LEFT THE SNOW BEHIND, THE VIKINGS AND THEIR CAPTIVES STOP TO EAT, AND IVARSSON IS ABLE TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM...

AMAZING! THEIR ANCESTORS WERE PART OF AN EARLY VIKING EXPEDITION! IN A STORM, SOME OF THEIR SHIPS WERE SWEEPED INTO THE ARCTIC OCEAN...

"AFTER GREAT HARDSHIPS, THEY FOUND THIS ISLAND! THEY'VE LIVED HERE EVER SINCE... COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE WORLD!"

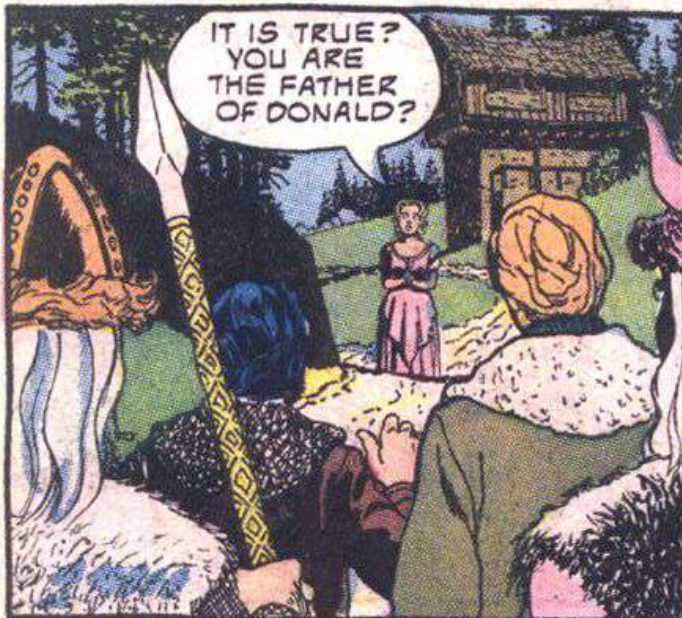
"THEY CALL THE LAND **ASTRAGARD**, AND BELIEVE IT IS THE GARDEN OF THE GODS, UNIQUE AND SET APART FOREVER..."



WHEN IVARSSON ASKS THIS QUESTION, THE VIKING BOUNDS AWAY DOWN THE TRAIL...



AS THEY APPROACH THE TOWN...

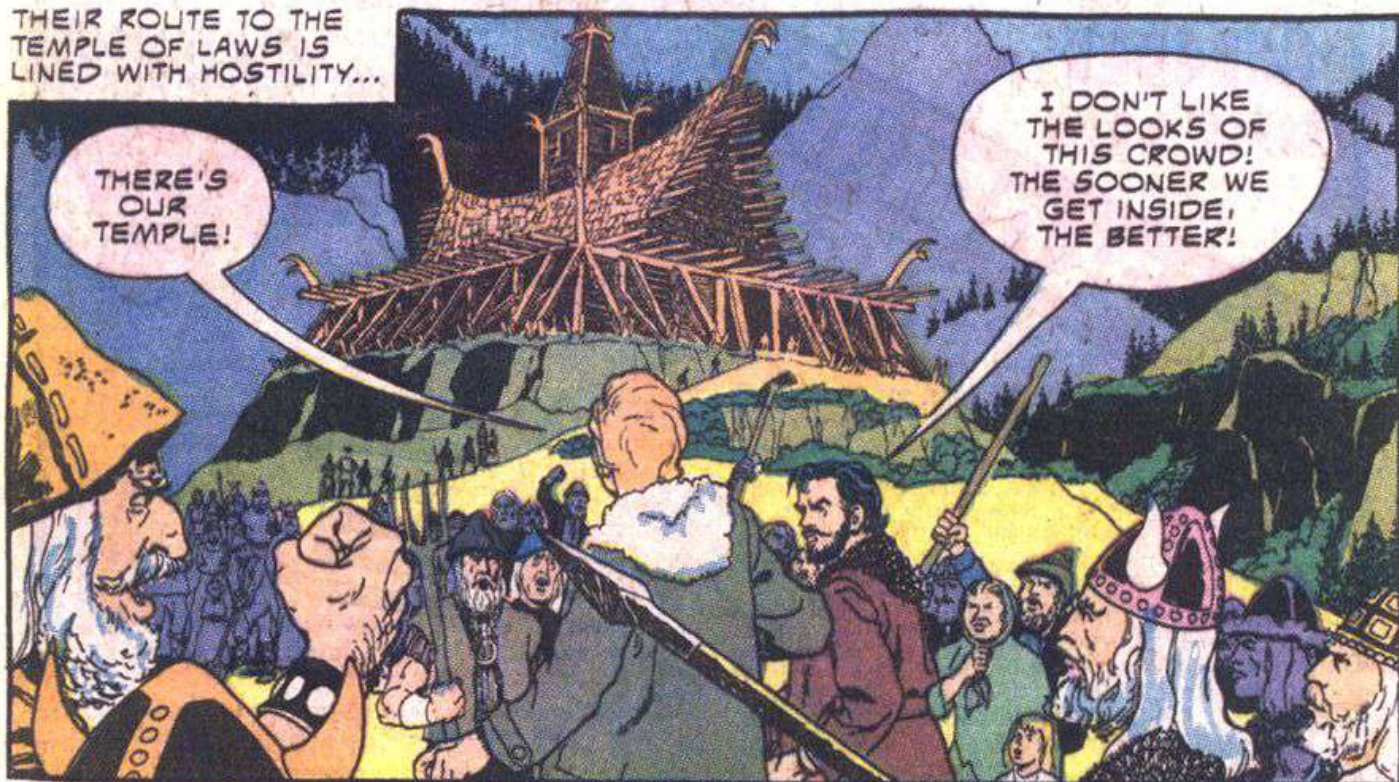




THE GUARDS CROWD CLOSE TO
IVARSSON, AND OOMIAK SEES
HIS CHANCE...

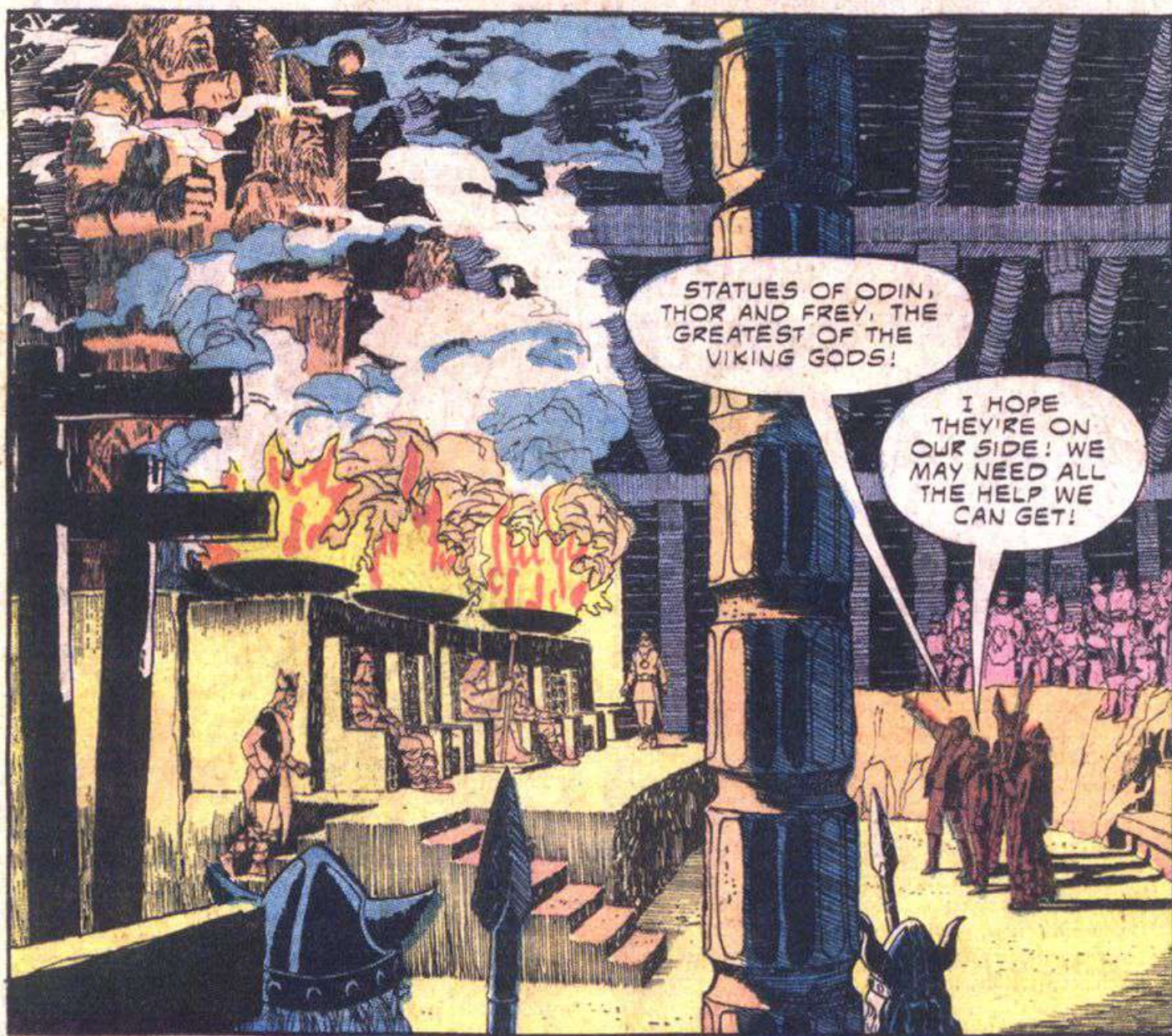


THEIR ROUTE TO THE
TEMPLE OF LAWS IS
LINED WITH HOSTILITY...



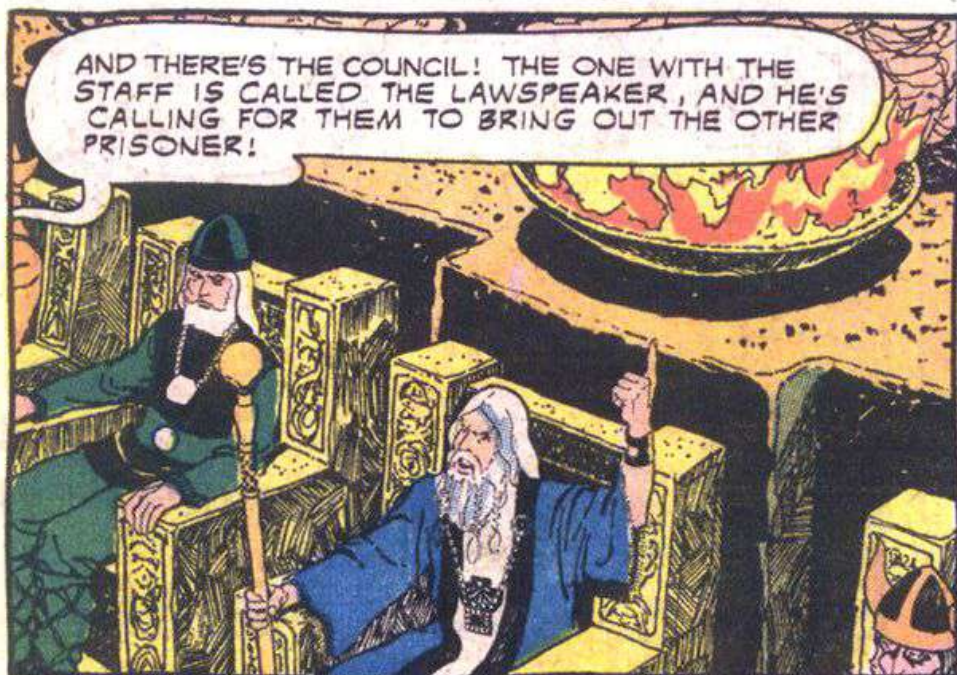
THERE'S
OUR
TEMPLE!

I DON'T LIKE
THE LOOKS OF
THIS CROWD!
THE SOONER WE
GET INSIDE,
THE BETTER!



STATUES OF ODIN,
THOR AND FREY, THE
GREATEST OF THE
VIKING GODS!

I HOPE
THEY'RE ON
OUR SIDE! WE
MAY NEED ALL
THE HELP WE
CAN GET!

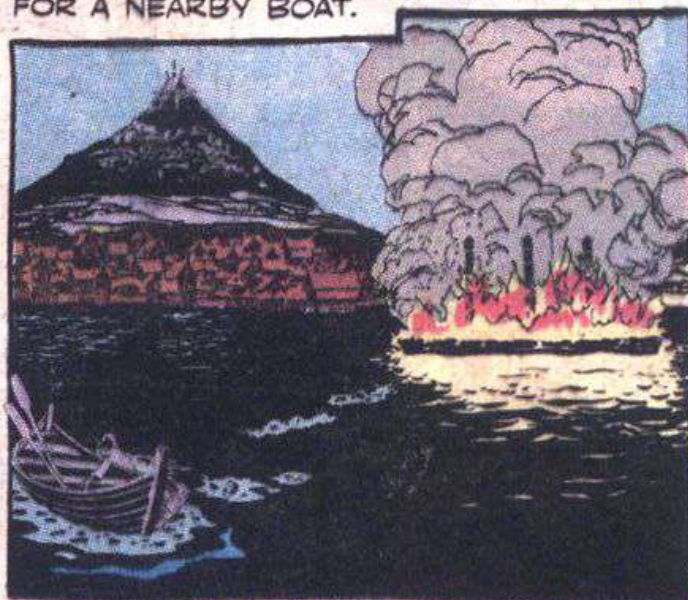


DONALD ROSS TRANSLATES THE GODI'S HARANGUE FOR HIS FATHER...





FREYJA QUICKLY CUTS THEIR BONDS AND MOMENTS LATER FOUR SWIMMERS HEAD FOR A NEARBY BOAT.



IN THE TALL
REEDS BEYOND
THE HARBOR,
THE FUGITIVES
ABANDON THEIR
BOAT, AND...



THEY ARE GOING!
THERE IS A HUNTER'S
CAVE ON THE CLIFF
ABOVE! WE CAN HIDE
THERE UNTIL MORNING!
THERE WILL BE FURS
THERE TO WARM US!



WAIT!
THERE'S
SOMEONE
COMING!

CRACKLE!
CRUNCH!



OOMIAK!
WE THOUGHT
WE'D LOST
YOU!

NO LOSE!
I HIDE
IN WATER!
YOUR BOAT
GO BY, I
FOLLOW!



FREYJA LEADS THE WAY TO THE CAVE, HIGH
ABOVE THE WATER, AND AT DAWN...

DONALD! DONALD!
BOATS! THEY
COME!





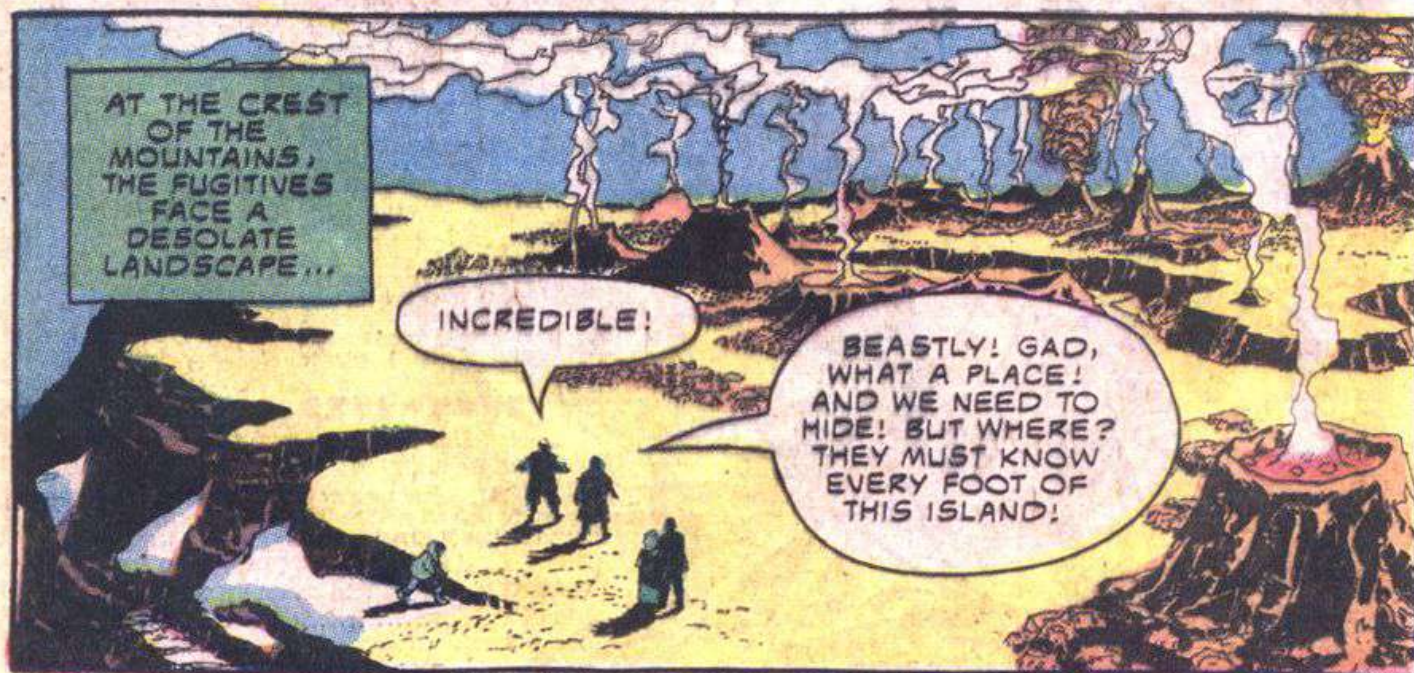
IT'S THAT
BLASTED
GODI AND
HIS MEN!



DOGS! THEY'VE
GOT HUNTING
DOGS! THEY'LL
SOON GET WIND
OF US!



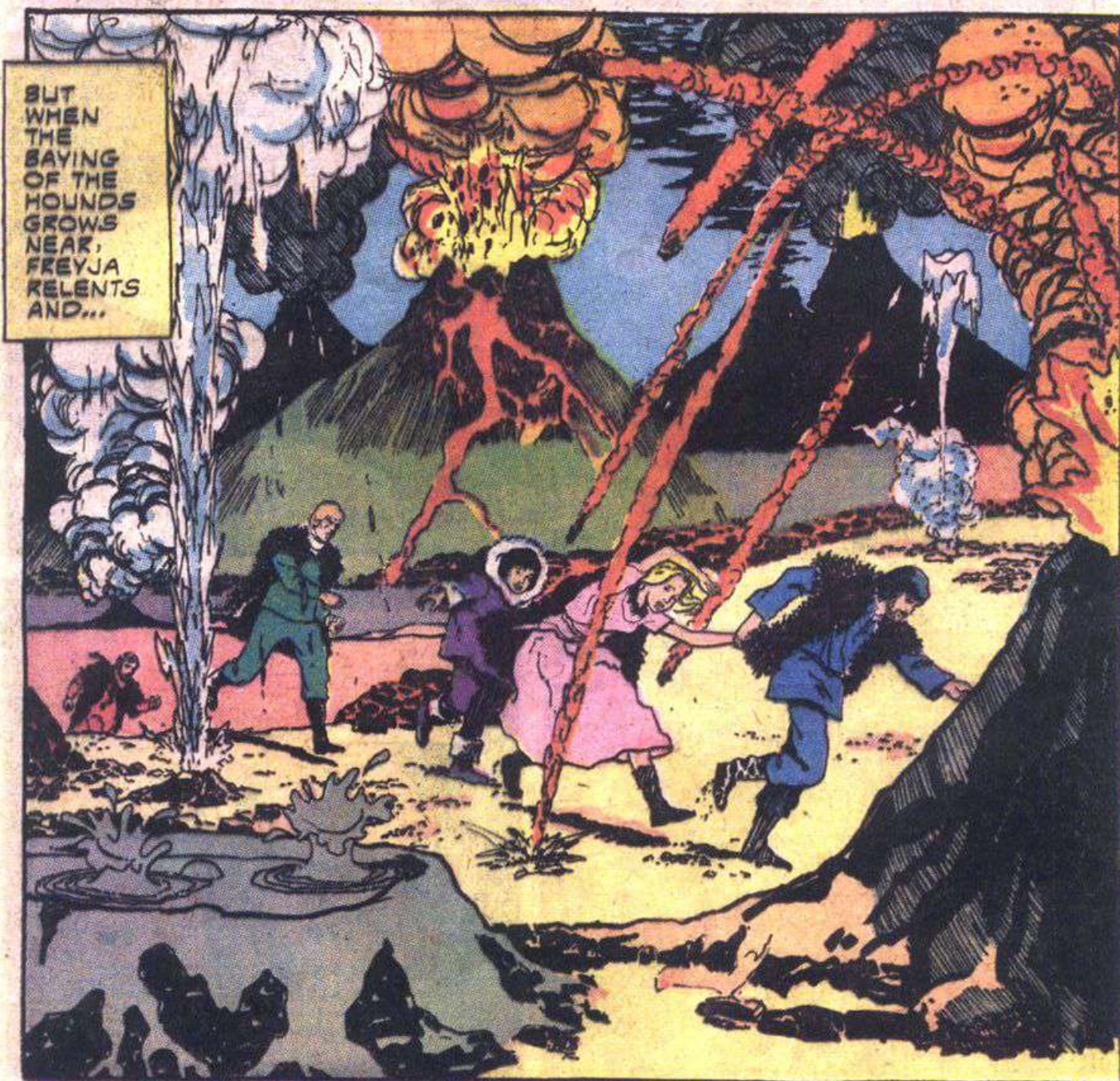
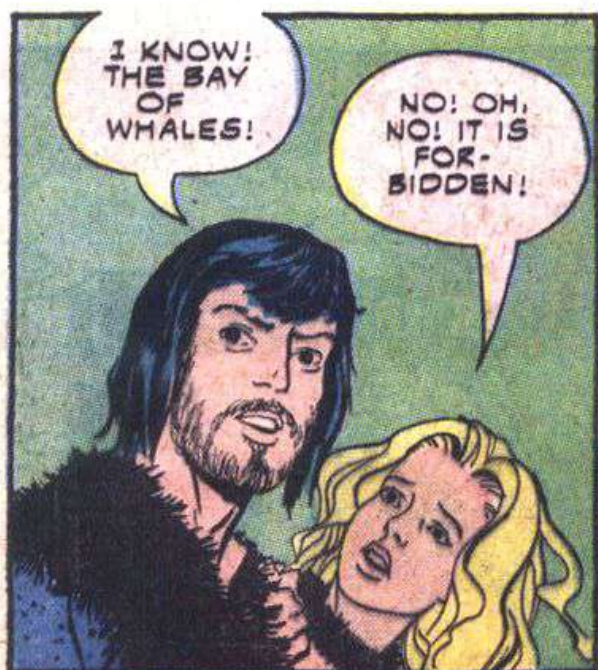
THERE'S
ONLY ONE
WAY TO GO
FROM HERE!
TO THE TOP OF
THE CLIFFS!

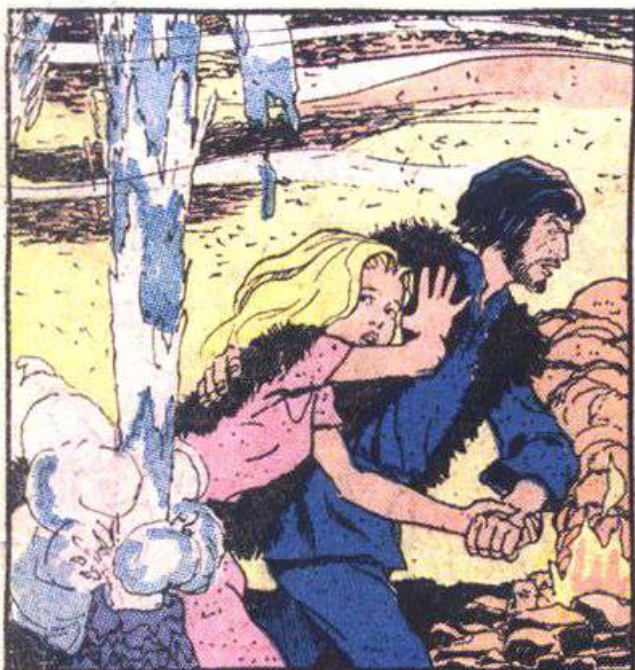


AT THE CREST
OF THE
MOUNTAINS,
THE FUGITIVES
FACE A
DESOLATE
LANDSCAPE...

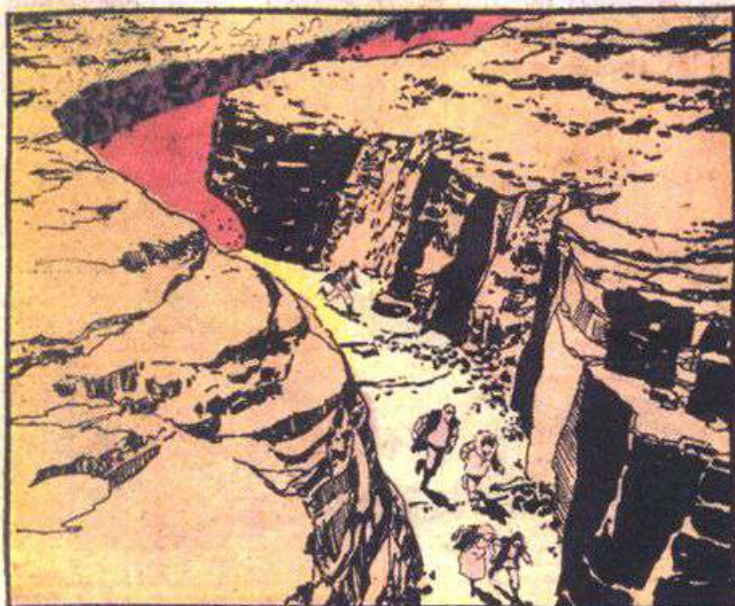
INCREDIBLE!

BEASTLY! GAD,
WHAT A PLACE!
AND WE NEED TO
HIDE! BUT WHERE?
THEY MUST KNOW
EVERY FOOT OF
THIS ISLAND!





THE FUGITIVES RACE FOR SHELTER IN A NARROW CREVICE IN THE CLIFFS...



AT THE OTHER END OF
THE ROCKY CORRIDOR...



AN INSTANT LATER...

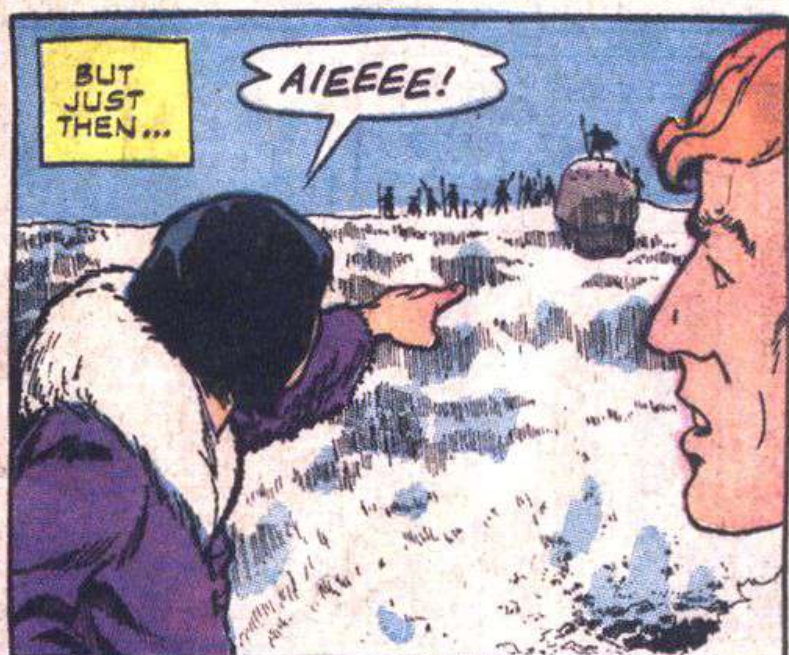


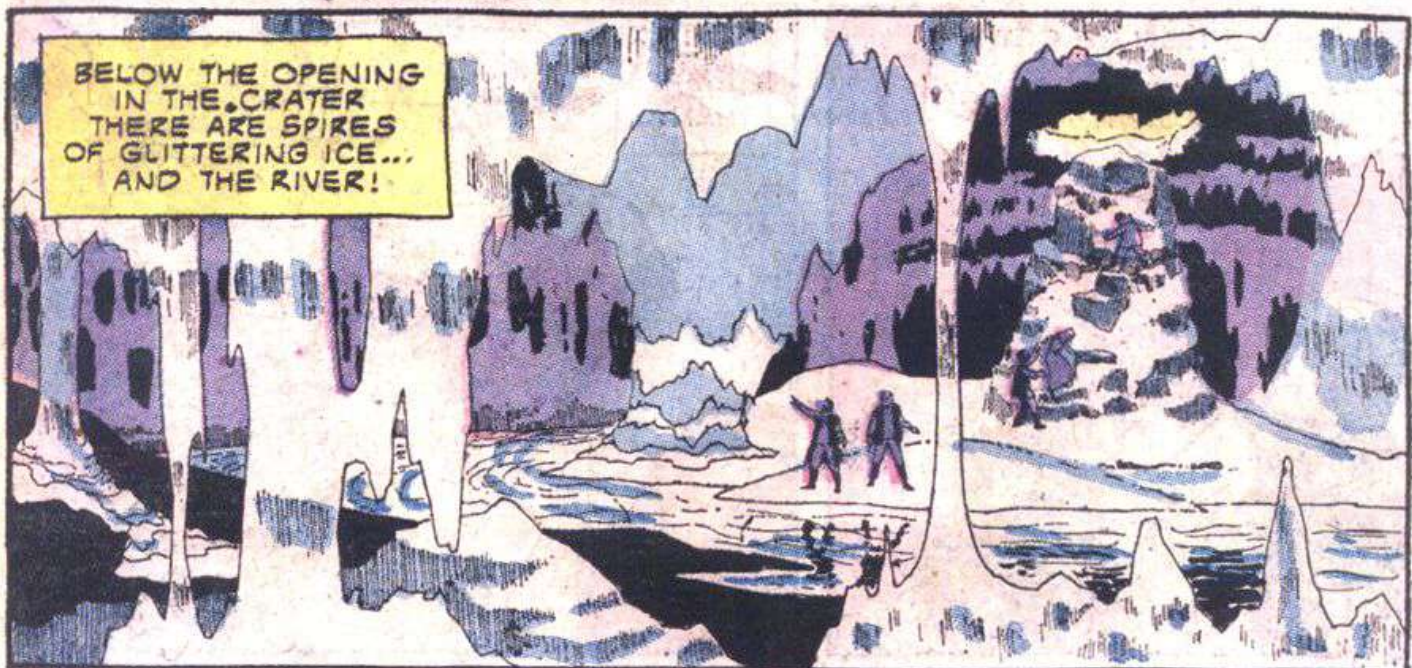
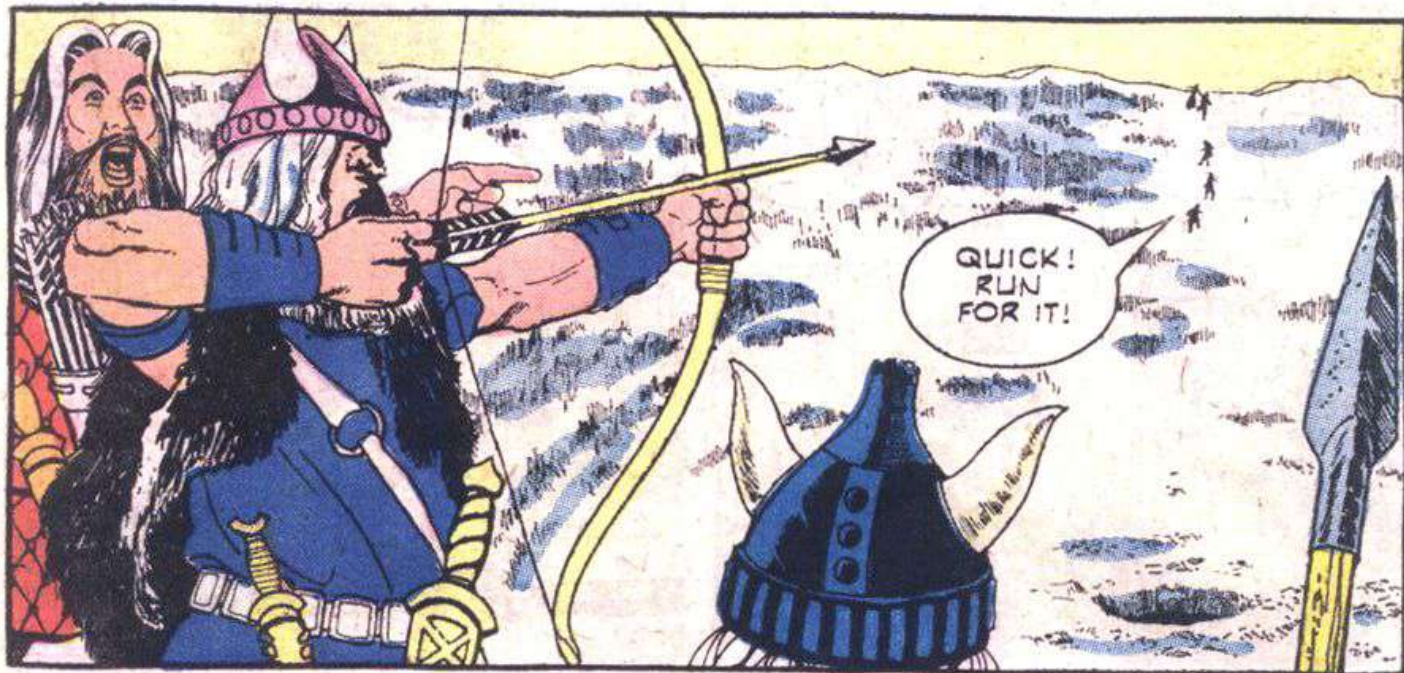
BEFORE LONG, THE BURNING WASTE-
LANDS ARE BEHIND, AND AHEAD IS ICE
AND SNOW...AND THE FROZEN SEA...

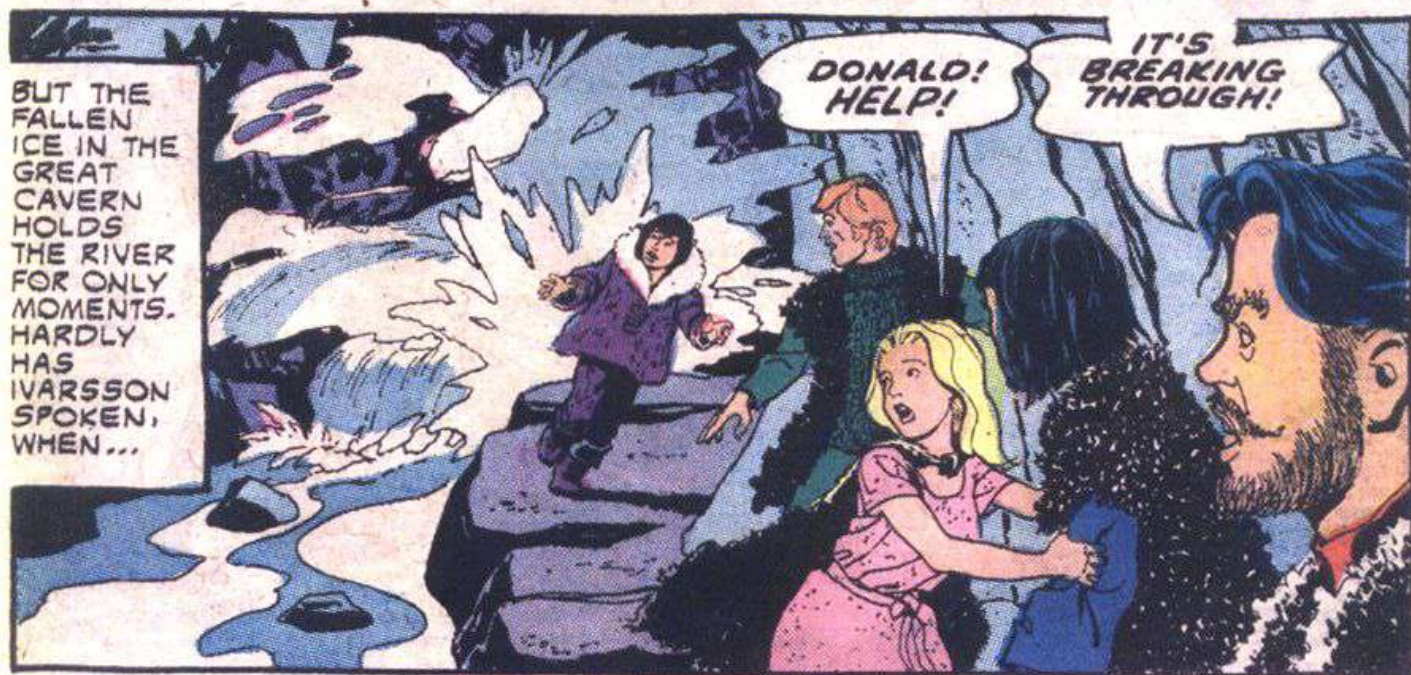
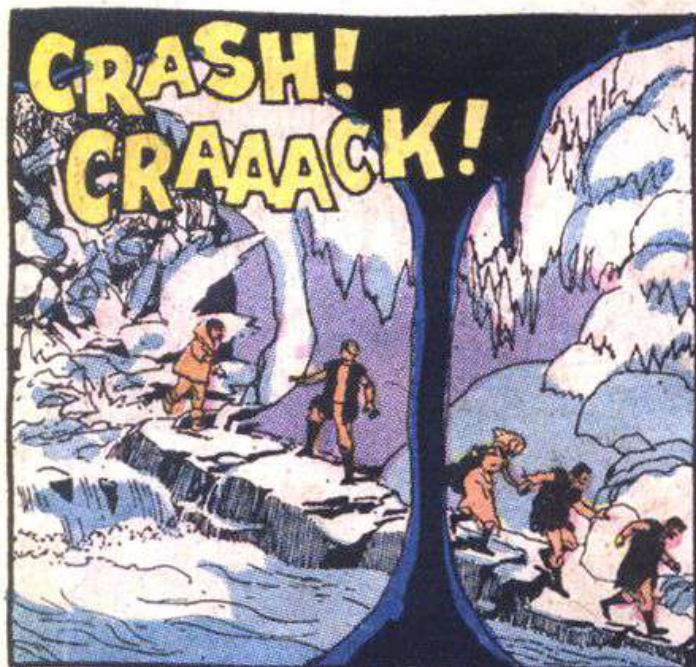


WE GO
DOWN!
FIND ICE
BOAT FLOAT!
VERY GOOD!

WHAT
ON EARTH
IS HE
TALKING
ABOUT?







SECONDS LATER,
AT THE BOTTOM
OF THE CLIFF...

A comic book panel showing a character falling into a pool of water at the bottom of a cliff. The water is splashing, and the cliff face is visible in the background. The text in the yellow box reads: "SECONDS LATER, AT THE BOTTOM OF THE CLIFF..."

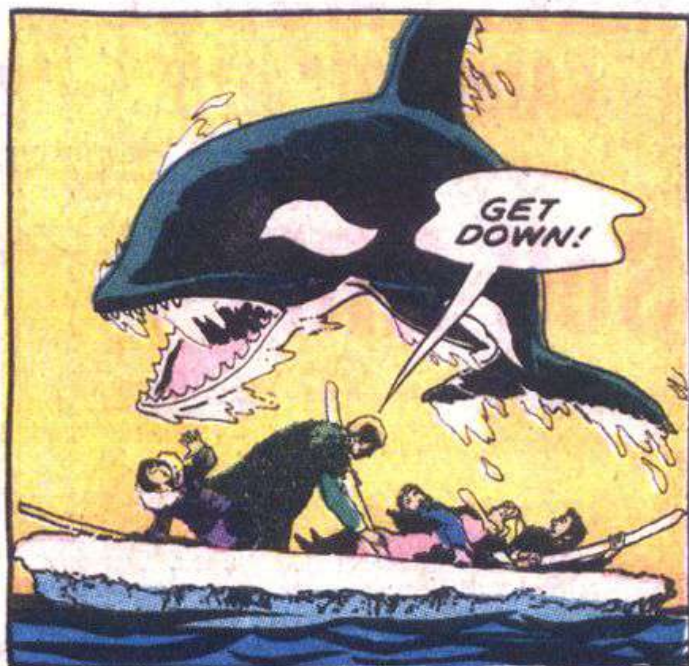
THE GRAVEYARD OF THE WHALES! ALL THOSE CREATURES... FROM EVERY SEA... THROUGH CENTURIES... AS IF TIME ITSELF LIES HERE!

THE FORBIDDEN PLACE! BUT WE'RE SAFE! THEY WON'T FOLLOW US HERE!

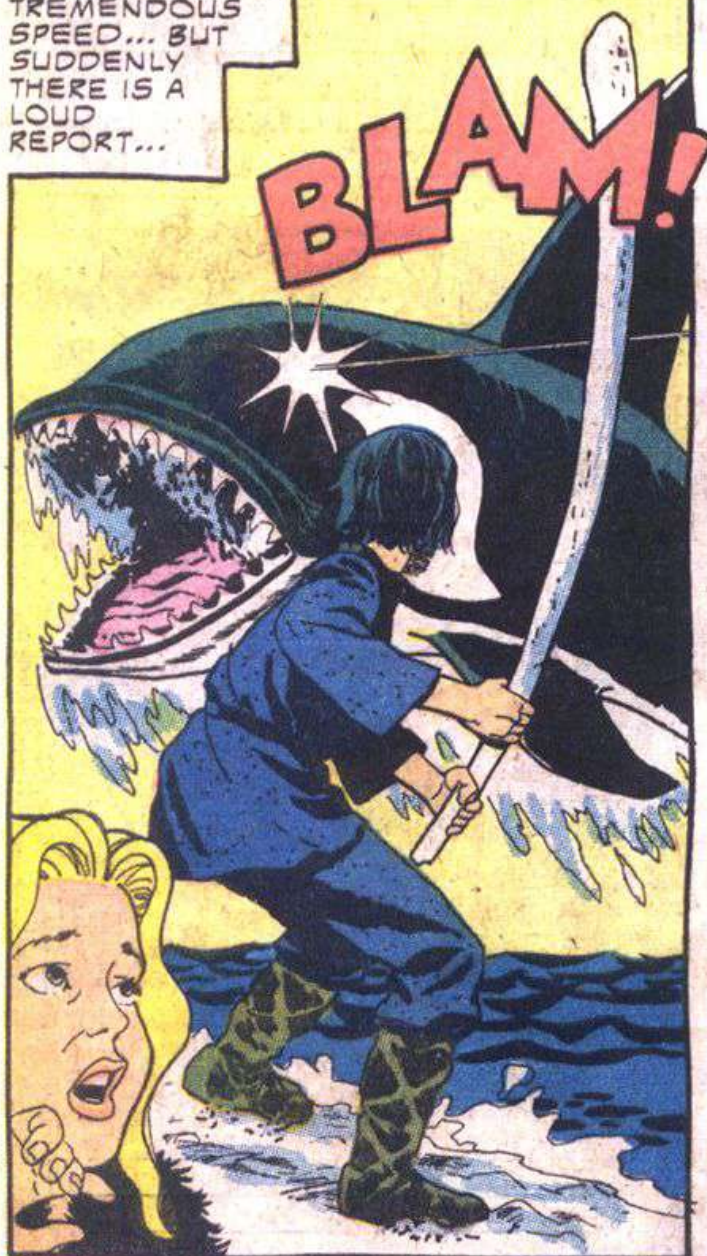
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THE FORBIDDEN PLACE! BUT WE'RE SAFE! THEY WON'T FOLLOW US HERE!

THE ADVENTURERS PUT OUT TO SEA ON A RAFT OF ICE, ONLY TO FACE A MENACE AS DEADLY AS THE GODS AND HIS WRATH...



ONE OF THE KILLER WHALES ATTACKS AT TREMENDOUS SPEED... BUT SUDDENLY THERE IS A LOUD REPORT...



MORE SOUNDS OF SHOT RING OUT AND THE WOUNDED SEA BEASTS RETREAT...



THE FUGITIVES WAIT WITH CAPTAIN BRIEUX UNTIL NIGHTFALL. THEN, WHEN THE WIND IS RIGHT, THEY CUT LOOSE THE CRIPPLED AIRSHIP...



WE ARE AGAIN A FREE-FLOATING BALLOON! SOON WE WILL BE IN GREENLAND!

UP THERE! THOSE CAMPFIRES... THE GODI AND HIS MEN ARE STILL WAITING FOR US! TOO BAD WE HAVE TO DISAPPOINT THEM!



M'SIEU! THE WIND! IT HAS CHANGED!



IT WILL CARRY US BACK TO THE CLIFFS— TO THE GODI, AND HIS GUARDS!



BUT TO THE NORSEMEN, THE AIRSHIP APPEARS TO BE A STRANGE MONSTER RISING FROM THE SEA TO DEVOUR THEM...

EEEEIGH!



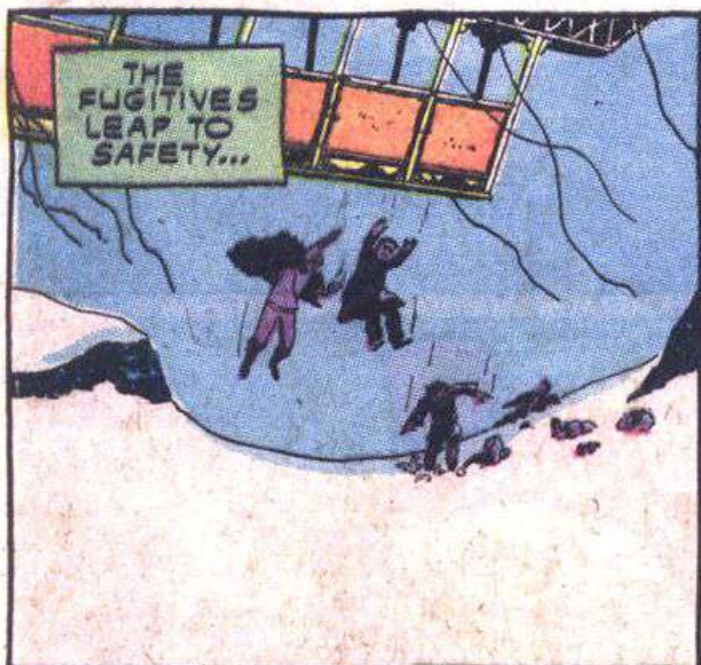
AAAGH!

THOUGH HIS MEN DESERT HIM, THE GODI REFUSES TO FLEE. HE SEIZES A BOW AND THRUSTS AN INCENDIARY ARROW INTO THE FIRE...

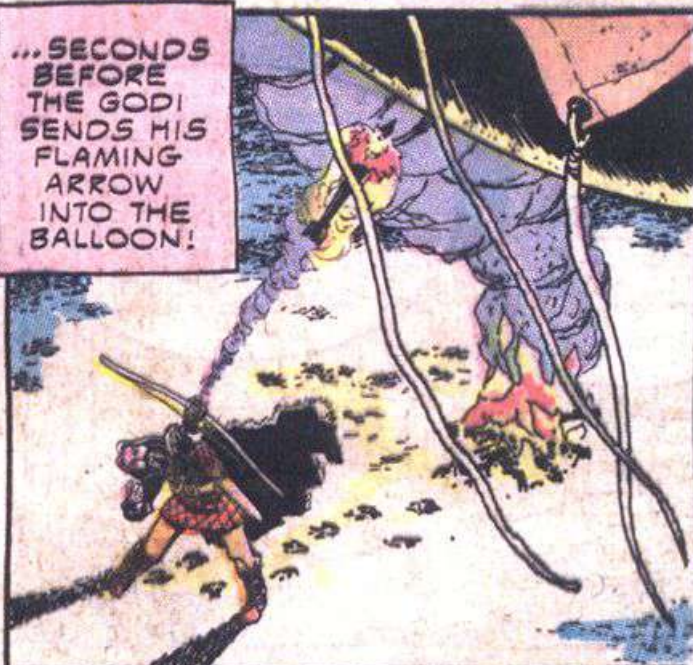


FIRE! HE WILL SHOOT AT US WITH FIRE! **MA FOI!** THE BALLOON IS FILLED WITH **HYDROGEN!**

EVERYONE OUT! **QUICK!**



THE FUGITIVES LEAP TO SAFETY...



...SECONDS BEFORE THE GODI SENDS HIS FLAMING ARROW INTO THE BALLOON!

THE AIRCRAFT EXPLODES IN A FIERY MASS, AS IT DROPS SUDDENLY ON THE FLEEING GODI BELOW...



THERE! IT'LL BE ALL RIGHT!

HORRIBLE! POOR FELLOW!

EEEEAAAAAH!!

BARROOOOM!



BUT, WITH THE GOD! NO LONGER ABLE TO STIR THE VIKINGS TO HATRED, THE VOYAGERS RETURN TO THE TOWN, WHERE THE COUNCIL ANNOUNCES A DIFFERENT VERDICT...

HE SAYS IT WAS THE GOD! WHO DID WRONG, LEADING THE PEOPLE TO HATRED AND VIOLENCE! WE MAY GO!



BUT WE MUST SWEAR A SOLEMN OATH NEVER TO TELL OF THIS ISLAND, AND WE MUST LEAVE A HOSTAGE!

A HOSTAGE? THAT'S... WHY, THAT'S WHAT I'D CALL AN OPPORTUNITY!



WHAT A DREAM FOR AN ARCHAEOLOGIST! A CIVILIZATION THAT'S BEEN UNCHANGED FOR A THOUSAND YEARS!

I'LL BE THE HOSTAGE!



I MUST SAY, IVARSSON SEEMS HAPPY ENOUGH! BUT WHAT A PITY WE CAN NEVER COME BACK HERE — TO THE BAY OF WHALES — AND THAT FORTUNE IN WHALEBONE AND AMBERGRIS! A TREASURE!

I DON'T NEED TO COME BACK! I FOUND WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR...

WE CANNOT RETURN, NOR CAN WE EVER FORGET... THE ISLAND AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD!

the END

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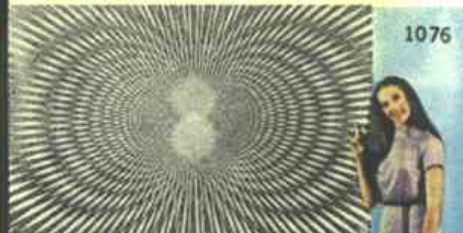
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